



**Western
Pacific
Regional
Fishery
Management
Council**

July 31, 2020

Andrew Lawler
Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Fisheries
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Ave. NW, Room 5128
Washington, DC 20230

Jim Sanford
Office of the United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Seafood Trade Task Force Co-Chairs,

This letter is in response to a July 10, 2020 Federal Register Notice *Request for Information (RFI) on Recommendations for a Comprehensive Interagency Seafood Trade Task Force*. The Western Pacific Regional Fishery Management Council submitted a letter to Secretary Ross, also dated on July 10, 2020, outlining issues faced in the Western Pacific Region that the Task Force could address. This letter and attachments specifically address the objectives of the Seafood Trade Task Force specified in the RFI: *improving access to foreign markets for US seafood exports through trade policy and negotiations; resolving technical barriers to US seafood exports; and otherwise supporting fair market access for US seafood products*.

In order to fulfill the Task Force objectives and compete internationally, optimize exports, and reduce the 'Seafood trade deficit', our fisheries need to produce and operate without unnecessary hindrance. Spatial closures without any evaluation of cost or discernible conservation benefits close 83% of sovereign US waters around Hawaii, forcing US longline fisheries to compete directly in the high seas with international fleets that exhibit compliance and monitoring practices that pale in comparison to US fisheries. Lack of federal agency expediency has repeatedly resulted in unnecessary closures and burdens to fisheries in our region (see attachment). The Hawaii swordfish fishery is currently not operating optimally as it awaits an overdue final rule to lift restrictions on sea turtle interactions. Meanwhile, market confidence in US swordfish supply wanes as it is supplanted by far less sustainable foreign sources. In the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, US longline fisheries have been allocated the lowest quota for bigeye tuna among nations with specified catch limits. This is a result of systemic failures to negotiate quotas commensurate to our fisheries' capacities and their highest standards for compliance and monitoring.

In addition to improving federal agency assistance to US fisheries, please also see attached recommendations to specifically address objectives of the Seafood Trade Task Force. Thank you for your attention to these matters and if you have any questions, please call me at (808) 522-8220.

Sincerely,

Taotasi Archie Soliai
Council Chairman

Kitty M. Simonds
Executive Director

CC: Hon. Wilbur Ross, Secretary of Commerce
Chris Oliver, Assistant Administrator, NOAA Fisheries
Robert Blair, Director of Policy and Strategic Planning, US Department of Commerce

Attachments: *Notable Needs for Seafood Trade Task Force (amended from July 10, 2020)*
Federal Agency Delays Resulting in Fishery Closures and Interruptions
Letter to Hon. Wilbur Ross dated July 10, 2020